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Brief reviews for October 2006

Bianco, Arnie (2006) *Teaching Tips from Your One-Minute Mentor: Quick and Easy Strategies for Classroom Success*. San Francisco, CA: [Jossey-Bass](#).

Pages: 134 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 0-7879-8241-5

Arnie Bianco, M.Ed., has been a teacher, a school principal, and is now a mentor-principal of a charter school in Tucson, Arizona. He designed *Teaching Tips from Your One-Minute Mentor* to educate and assist teachers with managing classroom behavior and improving their instructional time with students. He presents his strategies in short paragraphs with many illustrations, in chapters of ten to fourteen pages. Bianco also includes in each chapter at least one quotation that he has found to be memorable, and which he uses to support the topic of the chapter. He states that "the individuals who spoke or wrote them [the quotations] have a special ability to express a lot of wisdom in a very few words. These universal principles form a firm foundation for successful living and teaching" (p. x).

Bianco's ten-chapter book is a simple easy to read volume that covers topics on succeeding with challenges in classroom management, especially in the first years of teaching. The book has at least one illustration or table on each of the 128 pages and Bianco practices the good teaching procedures of telling us what he wants us to learn, teaching us, and telling us what he taught us.

In covering the topic of Active Learners (which takes two pages), Bianco compares the classroom to an orchestra, and suggests that the teacher as soloist (lecturer) should transition to teacher as conductor (facilitator) in most circumstances. He gives examples of both types of teaching and provides additional ways to get students to participate in class. He offers "sweat box" when students names are put on wooden sticks and drawn randomly from a box, or "Beanie Baby" when teacher tosses a Beanie Baby to the student he is calling on, and the student, after answering, tosses it back to teacher or to another student. On the very next page (p. 39), Bianco concludes with his "great one-liners for active listeners":

- Which one would you choose?
- I challenge you to. . .
- Tell me how you did that.
- What do you think might happen?
- What do you do next?
- Why is that one better?

Bianco's chapter on organizing the classroom includes a table on behavioral symptoms and instructional diagnosis, such as "students are bored, unchallenged = subject matter is too easy; students seem frustrated, act as though 'I don't care' = subject matter is too hard; and classroom features restlessness and noise = work is merely verbal" (p. 51). He explains and diagrams seating arrangements, with suggested placement of high risk, medium risk, and low risk students, and reminders to TWWA (teach while walking around) – all information that might be common sense to those who have already been teaching, but a nice reminder to teachers just starting out in the profession.

The last two chapters of *Teaching Tips* are good mentoring ideas for all educators, not just new teachers. Chapter Nine reminds us that networking with colleagues is important, and keeping an optimistic outlook and thinking proactively, rather than negatively, is the key to success in the classroom. Tips from Chapter Ten for

taking care of personal growth include taking professional or personal development classes, attending workshops and conferences related to your content area or educational skills, sharing information with others, exercising regularly, spending time with family and friends, and taking a vacation.

In summary, this book attempts to mentor classroom teachers in a quick and positive manner. However, in Bianco's zest to simplify the topics to fit his one-minute manager style, he has oversimplified techniques of classroom management. An annotated bibliography, for those who want to explore these topics in more detail, would add to the usefulness of this book.

Reviewed by Betty G. Hubschman, Ed.D. Dr. Hubschman is an Associate Professor and Director of the Human Resource Development Graduate Programs at Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida. Her major research interests are mentoring and coaching, technology, performance evaluation and improvement, work-life balance, and organizational change.

Brier, Norman (2006) *Enhancing Academic Motivation: An Intervention Program for Young Adolescents*. Champaign, IL: [Research Press](#).

Pages: 155 Price: \$21.95 ISBN: 0-87822-560-9

Brier's *Enhancing Academic Motivation* outlines a motivation enhancement intervention aimed at middle school students who have performed below grade level for at least one year. While this is the program's target population, the author notes that it could benefit any student. The program consists of 16 one-hour sessions (with flexibility) to be implemented by educators, clinicians, or parents.

As the program progresses, its central objectives are for students to adopt mastery rather than performance goals, understand that ability is malleable rather than fixed, demonstrate approach versus avoidance behaviors with regard to challenge, and utilize specific strategies to be more successful (e.g. relaxation, reducing distractions, problem solving). It is strongly based in theory. Goal Theory, Attribution Theory, and self efficacy versus learned helplessness are not only evident throughout the lessons and activities, but they are also explained in brief at the end of the book. The user need not have expertise in motivational theories, as they are built right into lessons and activities.

Each session is organized into easy-to-follow steps. Objectives, conceptual basis, necessary materials and scripted procedures are delineated for every lesson. Lessons utilize a great deal of "case study analysis" in which students read or are read a scenario and then discuss or role-play resolution to the problem presented. This provides students with very concrete examples of barriers to motivation and success and how those barriers can be overcome. Additionally, the program incorporates a self-monitoring component, with the students being provided "motivation tracking forms" to record their motivation toward academic tasks throughout the intervention. These, along with "leader reviews" provided for each lesson, help the facilitator evaluate the program, both in formative and summative terms.

I recommend this book for anyone seeking assistance with students who are disengaged from school. It provides a good introduction to important motivational theories and some very practical ways of using them to orient students toward challenging, worthwhile endeavors. Even if the program is not implemented as it is presented, the reader could certainly take away several good ideas to incorporate into his or her normal practice as a teacher, clinician, or parent.

Reviewed by Joshua M. Englehart, PhD. of LaMuth Middle School, Painesville, Ohio. Research interests include class size, gender issues, and student motivation.

Brint, Steven (2006) *Schools and Societies*. Second Edition. Stanford, CA: [Stanford University Press](#).

Pages: 340 Price: \$70.00 (hardcover), \$29.95 (paper) ISBN: 0804755051(hardcover), 804750734(paper).

In *Schools and Societies* (2nd Ed.), Steven Brint analyzes school systems in both industrialized and developing societies. He describes two sociological theories of schooling: the *structural-functionalist* theory, which sees society as a complex system of many parts that work together to promote stability; the social power theory, which proposes that the conflicts in society stem from the inequalities in society. His view is that neither theory alone provides an adequate sociological understanding of schooling, but that elements from each theory are useful in analyzing schooling systems throughout the world.

In his global assessment of schooling, Brint describes former and current school systems within the sociological framework of Macro-Historical, Meso-Institutional, and Micro-Interactional levels of analysis. Macro-Historical analysis is used to facilitate our understanding of current purposes and activities of schools (p. 20). Through this perspective we learn how social institutions, including schools, have evolved over time in industrialized societies. Meso-Institutional analysis is an investigation of a social institution at any given time. In a school system, information from this type of analysis includes how schools are organized and how schools respond to the external environment (p. 23). Micro-Interactional analysis is the study of human interactions within a school environment. This includes a critical appraisal of both the context and the process of the interaction between people, including facial expressions, gestures, posturing, and spoken words used during the interaction (p. 27-28).

Brint points out that individuals in industrialized societies attain higher levels of education. These systems are more organized and teachers have specific qualifications. For example, throughout the industrialized world, except in Germany, students between the ages of 6 and 16 study basically the same curricula: reading, math, and science. Around age 16 in most countries students are moved toward either a vocational track or a higher education track. Historically, higher education was the right of the wealthy and powerful who were trained for leadership positions in government or businesses. Today, students have the option (although not necessarily the means) to receive a higher education in most industrialized societies around the world. Since the 1980s more students are going into the higher education track as evidenced by the number of young adults returning to school for additional degrees and certificates after completion of vocational training.

In developing societies, issues of poverty, disease, and political turmoil, influence both the amount of time children are in school and the quality of education that they receive. Brint discusses factors that impact the quality of education in developing countries, such as economic stagnation, high financial indebtedness, and continued population growth. He points out the correlation between problems in developing countries and problems in the school systems of those countries. The one generally accepted concept throughout the world is that more education can and will solve societal problems for both industrialized and developing countries.

In contemporary societies, according to Brint, schooling has three major purposes: the transmission of school knowledge, socialization, and social selection (p. 97). The transmission of knowledge refers to the actual content that is taught by qualified teachers to students in school. He examines this topic by providing historical background on the development of curricula, comparing curricula in different parts of the world, exploring what social forces have shaped curricula in different countries, and looking at how well students in different countries master course information.

Socialization is defined as the "efforts of the carriers of a society's dominant ways of life to shape the values and conduct of others who are less integrated into those ways of life" (p.132). This process includes behavioral, moral, and cultural conformity. Again Brint looks at patterns of socialization from an historical perspective in different societies around the world to current practices in contemporary societies. He goes on to discuss socialization in both the classroom environment and on the playground which he defines as any space, other than a classroom, in which children learn about friendships, self-assertion, self-control, and conflict resolution. His belief is that the socialization process at this level equips students with skills they will need in informal adult social networks.

Social selection is, in Brint's view, the most important function that schools perform today (p.187). He sees social selection as both an opportunity and an inequality and examines each concept in depth from both a macro-historical and a meso-institutional level. Schooling as an opportunity for social selection has been increasingly important in industrialized societies in the past fifty years. After World War II in the United States, and later in European countries, occupational changes accounted for increased numbers of people seeking a higher education to secure better jobs. In the past twenty years, credential-based systems have been used to select individuals for higher-level jobs in most organizations and businesses in industrialized societies.

In Brint's view, inequalities in school performance and educational attainment are influenced in varying degrees by class, race/ethnicity, and gender. Social class can be either advantageous for success in schooling, or contribute to a child's disengagement from learning, leading to poor academic performance and early dropout rates.

Race/ethnicity in some societies play major roles in social selection in schooling. Characteristics of the minority group itself, such as cultural differences, attitudes toward schooling and how others treat members of the group contribute to how much influence race and ethnicity have at any specific time or place (p.199).

Gender inequalities also vary from one society to another. In patriarchal and developing societies, women are excluded from opportunities for higher education and the business world. Recently, in many industrialized societies, secondary schools and institutions of higher education have begun to show a trend toward equality in the number of enrollments of men and women.

Schools and Societies (2nd Ed.) is for students and educators interested in either education or sociology. Brint provides a thorough explanation of basic sociological concepts and supports his ideas/arguments with numerous references to existing studies, the works of former and current experts, and demographic data from reliable sources. He defines and assesses the complexities of school institutions around the globe. He discusses government influences on schools in both industrialized and developing nations, provides an historical perspective and a current picture of education in six countries, delineating both similarities and differences, strengths and weaknesses of the six systems. The text is well written, providing both general concepts and specific examples, charts and tables are clear and concise, and it concludes with an extensive list of references for further reading.

Reviewed by Patricia Kaufman, a Ph.D. student in the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership Program at Argosy University, Seattle, Washington

Cowhey, Mary (2006). *black ants and buddhists: Thinking Critically and Teaching Differently in the Primary Grades*. Portland, Maine: [Stenhouse Publishers](#).

Pages: 255 Price: \$18.00 ISBN: 1-57110-418-6

Significantly, the book has the affirmation of Dr. Sonia Nieto, well recognized for her work in multicultural studies, curriculum reform and teacher education particularly in the field of critical and cultural studies. *black ants and buddhists* advocates peace, justice and respect through forming a collaborative learning community. Substantial emphasis is given to critical thinking and experiential learning among a diverse landscape of students and as early as the first- and second-grade classroom. The expansive issues covered from American imperialism, war, racism, violence, hunger, poverty, homophobia and so forth, are indeed staggering at times.

The book serves as a philosophical, ideological and pragmatic map for classroom practitioners by providing alternative perspectives focusing on critical teaching and learning steadfastly grounded in Freirean liberatory pedagogy and praxis. Yes, other important thinkers are included, but Freire is the standout protagonist. It would do well for teacher-education programs and preservice educators to study the breath of teacher knowledge set forth in this writing. The book is timely in its effort to address what is fast becoming a highly globalized classroom environment in American public schools. Thinking, visionary educators now demand recognition of diversity and pluralistic thought and action. Cowhey is advocating what is known in cultural critical studies as progressive, radical, transgressive approaches toward teaching and learning that in many ways are in opposition to the standardized, mechanized and often alienating educational experience that children most often undergo in this country.

In essence, the author admonishes public school teachers to move beyond the perfunctory, positivist, deterministic practice used to support what antioppressive educators deem as the hidden curriculum (Giroux, 1998). A curriculum that functions to buttress the power, privilege and thinking of the dominant few. Cowhey conveys deep concern over the politics of identity linked to difference which adversely impacts not only the learning, but also the social growth and development of the student. Contrastively, Cowhey attempts to interact and indeed reach each student individually as well as their families-recognizing that all are unique human beings with varying frames of reference and worldviews.

At its core the book focuses on engaging students at a young age in critical inquiry, pluralistic reflection and learning within the context of lived experience among self and other. "Each chapter in this book tells a story about teaching and learning and attempts to answer by illustration some of the questions teachers ask about teaching critically . . ." (p. 21). Cowhey offers examples and solid ways and means for educators to engage students in critical inquiry and discovery at a young age; to care about themselves and others, their families and communities. Her accounts, drawn from teaching experience, are valuable to both veteran and new educators. Examples and details provide insights into how she tackles a study unit, parent-guardian-teacher relationships, and a host of other responsibilities. All of these demonstrate how this educator welds theory and practice into a virtually seamless process.

Some readers may at times be taken aback by the confronting tone of the book. The prologue orients the reader to a key theme in the book: that of personal responsibility within our schools and homes, thereby cogently establishing an activist tone for what is to come. Through the lived narratives of her own life, coupled with her teaching and dedication to activism and social justice, Cowhey gives strong evidence of her commitment to live an undivided life by making clear that there is no dissonance among her pedagogic creed, identity and daily living. Such thinking is grounded in the work of Palmer (2004), a consummate and highly awarded educator-whose work reveals his own quest for an undivided life, a search for wholeness. Palmer's position is in line with Freire's practice of striving for authentic selves. Therefore, Cowhey's book is replete with how her teaching and living are intertwined. She continually models for her students the relevance of

lived experience, equity and justice within the adolescent classroom environment. Much in the vein of recognized teacher-author, bell hooks, who espouses connection and an engaged community of learners forged through transgressive teaching, Cowhey too, shares her own lived experiences of going against the grain of socioeducational injustices in an effort to extend student learning, comprehension and reflection of critical social issues.

Why the book's title? A Buddhist student of Cowhey's raises the question as to why Americans feel it is okay to kill black ants, when he witnesses another student carelessly stomping ants. Upon reflection of this incident, the author offers the following insight to her readers/teachers.

Some traditional teachers argued that it was fine to continue to sing Christmas carols at a concert and have Christmas parties in classrooms and color pictures of Santa Claus, because everyone in America knows what Christmas is, and if they don't, they should learn . . . not only is it culturally acceptable for Americans to crush ants, but we land-mine and carpet-bomb countries. We defoliated much of Vietnam. We carry out "shock and awe" bombing campaigns in the cradle of ancient civilizations (p. 4).

The above quote is reflective of Cowhey's resolute position against mainstream education's unthinking and uncaring approach toward needless violence and suffering in diverse and multicultural students' lives. Again, the content of the book is powerful, forceful and activist in tone. It appears that Cowhey took to heart Freire's mandate that teachers should be cultural workers and politicians working against the oppressively political environment of mainstream education. Importantly, the social messages and intended consciousness-raising are made palatable for those who would otherwise tune out, even some teachers, by the inclusion of Cowhey's lived experiences growing up in hunger while facing other disheartening hardships, much like Freire. Further still, the shared voices and lives of her students make even the toughest heart yield to the authentic narratives of wisdom and understanding spoken through the words of children-who deftly demonstrate their critical thinking skills in learning while simultaneously expressing views with relevance to real world issues.

Freire forged his antioppressive pedagogy through lived experience within a "middle-class family that had lost its economic base . . ." (Freire, 2001, p. 13) revealing hunger and class borders among rich and poor as a child growing up in Brazil and within an oppressive political climate. Through his observation and experiences of oppression there began a fermenting of sociopolitical and educational resistance toward unnecessary human suffering that would emerge in what has become the manifesto for antioppressive/progressive educators, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It is no exaggeration that many who seek to practice antioppressive education revere the revolutionary tenants of his theoretical framework. Freire's work often mirrors, and certainly extends, the thinking of John Dewey-renowned for his advocacy of democracy and freedom of thinking and human agency through progressive education.

Of the vast strands of thought that coalesce into Freire's antioppressive pedagogy only highlights can be offered at this time such as: education should not be banked into the minds of students, whereby educators simply deposit information without engaging students in critical thought. Teaching and learning should be based in problem-posing practice allowing students to become viable participants in their own education through the dialectic or questioning and debate of all issues. Dialogue is foundational to emancipatory teaching-learning in the promotion of greater dignity and human connection. Education requires relevance of lived experiences and the world. The education model should be predicated on teacher-student and student-teacher; where each learns from the other without impediment by a false hierarchal framework commonly found in educational systems and practices of public education.

It would be unfortunate for readers, particularly educators, to misperceive the pedagogic depth of *black ants and buddhists*. Make no mistake, this book, illustrated with children's drawings, is not your typical how-to, educator's book. Rather, this work should be recognized as a serious and aggressive effort toward teacher and educator reform, and for which the more traditional-minded teacher or as Cowhey might claim, the stereotypical-minded, just might balk. With candor she reveals the resistance she feels--toward her resistance to the status quo and the conflicts that arise as she advocates and presses for success at the center of education for students who too often are lost at the margins. The author should be commended for taking risks on several fronts: taking stereotypical teaching and teachers to task by refusing to dumb down students, addressing the politics among colleagues, new teacher fears, remaining true to her role as an activist both within and outside of the classroom setting, and confronting those in positions of local and national power who continue to oppress, the oppressed.

Cowhey's reference to Freire's pedagogic creed and practice is a constant throughout *black ants and buddhists*. Her continued study of this legendary educator inspired Cowhey's passion to

teach critically because I believe young children are capable of amazing things, far more than is usually expected of them. I am not talking about raising a score on a standardized math test (although that often happens). I am talking about thinking critically and learning to learn, learning to use basic skills like reading, writing, solving mathematical problems, analyzing data,

public speaking, scientific observation, and inquiry as an active citizen in your community. I believe young children can think about fairness and are deeply moved and highly motivated by the recognition of injustice (p. 18).

Every page is jam-packed with valuable information that defies a single reading. If there are any shortcomings, it is that Cowhey never fully reveals how she time manages individual student attention, parent-guardian meetings and weekly letters, teaching evening courses, implementing experiential learning and community activism in the curriculum, allocating significant time to discussion and debate and numerous other activities and outreach efforts while simultaneously teaching to the test. Only surface-level reference is made to negotiating state-mandated testing and curriculum. No doubt, even the veteran educator would marvel in disbelief at this almost superhuman educator. Parents reading this work might question, where could I find such an archangel for my child? The closest the reader comes to a possible answer is that Cowhey briefly tells of how she purposefully sought out the principal and school in which she finds herself most gratefully in partnership. Cowhey has virtually defied the critics who claim that students cannot engage in critical thinking and learning while grappling with such hard-hitting issues at such a young age.

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Reviewed by B. Lara Lee, Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations, University of North Carolina Greensboro. Lee completed an M.A. in Communication with emphasis on rhetorical criticism at Wake Forest University

Crow, Sherry R. (2005). *Information Literacy: A Guide for the Library Media Specialist*. Marion, IL: [Pieces of Learning](#).

Pages: 182 Price: \$36.95 ISBN: 0-1-931334-51-X

In the article, "What Motivates a Lifelong Learner?" Sherry R. Crow states, "Lifelong learners are people who display an attitude and ability that prompts them to learn across their life spans" (2006, p. 22). That belief is the driving theme behind Crow's book, *Information Literacy: A Guide for Library Media Specialists*. Crow urges media specialists to "let go" of control and let the library media center be used in a way that uniquely promotes information literacy. An enthusiastic media specialist herself, she gives the advice, "Offer support and ideas when problems occur, and offer your teachers chocolate!"

Information Literacy is both a textbook and a resource. In the textbook vein, Crow introduces readers to the Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning, as set forth by the American Association for School Librarians (AASL), in a way that is easy to understand and picture being taught, promoted, and used. These Information Literacy Standards, divided into three categories (Information Literacy, Independent Learning, and Social Responsibility), serve as a foundation for student learning, as well as for both personal and professional application. Skills included within these standards include being able to access, evaluate, and use information; choosing to pursue information related to personal interests; and contributing positively to the learning community.

As a resource, *Information Literacy* is an excellent tool filled with lesson plans, templates, rubrics worksheets, checklists, and project ideas. Most of the print resources found in these chapters also can be found on the accompanying CD-Rom in Microsoft Word and/or PDF formats so that users can more easily begin implementing Crow's ideas. (The advantage of the Microsoft Word documents would be that you can save and type in your own information. The advantage of the PDF documents would be their high reproduction quality and ability to preserve graphics in the original format.)

While *Information Literacy* primarily targets the library media specialist, it could also assist teachers interested in promoting information literacy in their classrooms or in their schools. To either party, Crow advocates collaboration, flexible scheduling, assessment, and motivational reading programs as means of accomplishing these goals. Each of these facets is specifically and clearly addressed in its own chapter.

Overall, the book is great as both a book and a text. While the skills taught within the text are not new, they continue to remain necessary. The book also serves as a nice complement to *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* (American Library Association and Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1998), the original document introducing the nine Information Literacy Standards. The only change that might have made this book more user-friendly is a more categorically-organized Appendix. While the 90-page Appendix is filled with useful resources, it is unclear how to find and select the most appropriate tool. Aside from this factor, users will find *Information Literacy* to be an easy read and motivationally stimulating.

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Crow, S. R. (2006) What motivates a lifelong learner. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 12(1): 22-34.

Reviewed by Jennifer Banas, currently on sabbatical leave from her full-time high school health teaching position while working on her dissertation in partial fulfillment of an EdD in Instructional Technology. She also holds a MEd in Curriculum and Instruction and is a certified school media specialist.

Dede, Chris, editor. (2006). *Online Professional Development for Teachers: Emerging Models and Methods*. Cambridge, MA: [Harvard Education Publishing](#).

Pages: 330 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 1-891792-73-3

With the current emphasis on educational reform, a plethora of online professional development programs have emerged to foster teachers application of research-based strategies to improve student learning and achievement in classroom practice. The ever-increasing number of both traditional and online professional development programs available, however, can make it confusing for teachers, teacher educators, school system leaders, staff development professionals, researchers, and educational policy makers to compare and draw conclusions about them.

Online Professional Development for Teachers: Emerging Models and Methods, edited by Chris Dede, a Timothy E. Wirth Professor in Learning Technologies at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE), offers practical insights and clear evaluations as it profiles ten exemplary online professional development models with substantial records of success. It analyses these innovative models in light of the existing empirical research and proposes a design-based research (e.g. Collins, Joseph, & Bielaczyc, 2004) approach for future investigations. This book stems from the third conference of an invitational conference series at the HGSE with a goal of finding a synthesis between research and practice to create usable knowledge that solves problems of educational practice and advances the basic theoretical knowledge of educational issues. Additional details about the conference are available at <http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~uk/otpd/index.htm>.

The book is organized into twelve chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of what is currently known and not known in the empirical research on online professional development. Chapters two through 11 each describe an exemplary online professional development model. Some of these models focus on targeting teachers at specific points in the pipeline (eMentoring for Student Success project, providing science-specific mentoring and professional development for early-career science teachers via an online community). Other models, such as Indiana University's Quest Atlantis Project and HGSE's WIDE World, help teachers go beyond learning new skills and methods towards transforming their teaching practice. Some models use and disseminate rich education resources (Seminars on Science at the American Museum of Natural History). Still others engender an organizational capacity-building approach (EdTech Leaders Online program). Finally, chapter 12 contrasts current characteristics of these alternative models, builds collective insights to guide design and implementation, and proposes key themes and related methodologies for studying the evolution of effective models.

This book is a timely response to the question that lies at the heart of online professional development: How can professional development for teachers be more efficient and effective? I found the literature review on online teacher professional development in chapter one effectively framed the descriptions of the online professional development models in following chapters. Although many of the models focus on scaffolding math and science teaching, some of the models also include improvement of teaching in other disciplines. Dede and the team of four advanced HGSE doctoral students working with him provide a particularly insightful summary in chapter 12 that directly address the tensions that exist between the various perspectives of the educational stakeholders involved. I would recommend this book for all educators interested in learning more about the innovations and challenges in designing, implementing, and sustaining

online professional development programs for teachers.

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Reviewed by by Nobuko Fujita, a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at OISE/UT. Her research interests include online learning technologies and teacher education.

Kramer, Pamela A. & Kappa Delta Pi. (2005). *The ABCs of Classroom Management: An A-Z Sampler for Designing Your Learning Community*. Indianapolis: [Kappa Delta Pi](#).

Pages: 86 Price: \$10.95 ISBN: 0912099437

This is an excellent little book focusing on the basics of effective discipline. It is well organized and provides an easy to follow step-by-step format for teachers to utilize. The book is intended to be a guide and resource tool, not a magic solution to the age-old problem of classroom discipline.

The authors provide a list of common classroom problems and offer practical suggestions on how to handle each problem. Discipline has been the number one problem in education for the past 25 years, which clearly indicates that discipline is an ongoing process. The suggestions presented are practical, useful, and can be utilized by both novice and veteran teachers.

This book should be placed in the hands of all teachers at the beginning of the year. The quick search format allows teachers to go immediately to the problem they are encountering. It could also be used as a staff development tool throughout the school year.

The short amount of time required to read the book would be a solid investment for those who deal with students on a day to day basis. It could greatly enhance their success as a classroom teacher. The practical experience of the author is evident in that the solutions offered are practical and workable, not just full of theory and what should work. An enjoyable read!

Reviewed by Dr. David E. Lee, Educational Leadership and Research, University of Southern Mississippi.

McDougal, James; Chafouleas, Sandra & Waterman, Betsy (2006). *Functional Behavioral Assessment and Intervention in Schools*. Champaign, IL: [Research Press](#).

Pages: 217 Price: \$32.95 ISBN: 0878225552

McDougal, Chafouleas, and Waterman have written a practical guidebook on functional behavioral assessments (FBAs) and their use in school interventions. The book includes a table of contents, a listing of figures and tables, a listing of worksheets, eleven chapters, three appendices, and references. It does not include an index.

FBAs are an important tool for use with students who have disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) requires schools to conduct functional behavioral assessments whenever a behavior problem is associated with the disability. FBAs correlate problem behavior with the preceding environmental factors and the consequential responses. This information is used to posit a functional goal for the behavior. For example, a tantrum may occur whenever a child is asked to read independently. If the response to a tantrum is that the child is sent to the office and does not have to do the reading, then the functional goal could be to avoid the task. A behavioral intervention plan (BIP) will then be designed that uses the hypothesis that the child wants to avoid independent reading. In this hypothetical case, assistance in reading might help to reduce the number of tantrums by eliminating the stressor in the environment.

All three authors are qualified both academically and professionally to deal with the topic of FBAs and school interventions. The book is well written and takes the reader through an organized process of problem identification, problem analysis, assessment, intervention plan development, and intervention plan evaluation. However it goes beyond the traditional use of FBAs for children with disabilities and extends usage to include problem behavior in the general population. School psychologists and other trained specialists looking for a practical guidebook on the traditional use of FBAs will find *Conducting School-Based Functional Behavioral*

Assessments (Watson and Steege, 2003) more helpful.

The difficulty with this book is that it is intended for use by a wide range of readers: school psychologists, counselors, administrators, and teachers. Readers without an adequate background in psychology and assessment may not understand the limitations of functional behavioral assessments. The authors provide a short discussion on the limitations of FBAs in the concluding chapter. Readers needing more background on FBAs can consult Gresham, Watson, and Skinner (2001).

Having pointed out the potential problems, I would like to say that the authors have done a good job on extending the uses of FBAs beyond students with disabilities to students in the general population who manifest extreme behavioral problems. The management of disruptive behavior has become a growing problem in classrooms. School psychologists, counselors, administrators, and teachers may find this book useful. I recommend it for academic and school libraries.

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Watson, T. S. & Steege, M.W. (2003). *Conducting school-based functional behavioral assessments*. New York: Guilford Press.

Reviewed by Cynthia Crosser, Social Science and Humanities Reference Librarian/Education and Psychology Subject Specialist at the University of Maine. In addition to her M.S. in Library Studies from Florida State University, she has an M.A. in Linguistics from the University of Florida with a specialization in language acquisition. She is currently pursuing an M.Ed with an emphasis on literacy and educational assessment.

Meador, Karen (2005). *Tiered Activities for Learning Centers: Differentiation in Math, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies*. Marion, IL: [Pieces of Learning](#).

Pages: 104 Price: \$15.95 ISBN: 1-931334-29-3

The book, *Tiered Activities for Learning Centers*, provides elementary educators with ideas for utilizing learning centers in the classroom. The focus of the book is on differentiating centers to meet the needs of all students, from the least to the most capable. While introducing the subject of centers, Meador poses and answers several questions about the book's purpose, its audience, and its use. She then presents some common myths regarding learning centers. The ones she cites are thought-provoking, such as "Centers should be used solely in the primary grades." The author dispels each myth, offering instead some true facts about centers. I was interested in this book because I have utilized learning centers in both the primary and intermediate grades. Through my experience, I have found centers to be excellent motivators for children.

Meador gives seven different reasons to use centers or stations, explaining why they are beneficial to children. After that she offers some suggestions on how to effectively plan centers. The types of activities she presents can help educators think in different ways about planning them. Sometimes teachers get stuck in a rut when using them, planning similar types of activities for their students. Reading Meador's list sparked my thinking about ways I can use centers I had not previously considered. The author then gave a multitude of ideas on how to arrange stations. One of my favorites was to place a poster display under a desk with pillows and flashlights for the students to explore. A center arranged in this manner would be sought after in my classroom of second graders.

Meador then discusses the need for creating tiered centers, stating the differing needs of the students as the primary reason for doing this. Differentiating instruction for both lower and higher level learners is vital in the educational field. Meador affirms this, including several visuals to illustrate her point. She then gives ideas for differentiating the learning, giving simple, yet effective suggestions.

Center management comprises the next section of the book, and including this topic in a book of this nature is important. Meador gives simple guidelines for center work, some obvious, some less so. These management tips would be helpful for a teacher new to the field. The author's large and small group instruction model would be helpful to teachers and could be used in a variety of subjects. A teacher could employ this rotation model during literacy time while conducting guided reading groups. Likewise, the teacher could utilize it during math to reinforce or introduce concepts in a small group setting.

The remainder of the book introduces twelve specific center activities spanning all subject areas. Each includes the standard addressed, objectives, materials, student directions, and ideas for tiering the center. I found the organization of this section to be slightly confusing. Had the centers been organized according to subject matter, it would have helped me more effectively absorb the information. Although some activities spanned several subjects, they could have been cross-referenced to each other.

I was hoping for student instructions that could be copied directly from the book, but found those directions were printed with the same size type and font as the other information. Some of the student instructions would require either modeling by the teacher or a simplified rewriting of the directions. For instance, I had a 10-year-old read the instructions for several centers, and she was puzzled about what to do. After I explained the activities, she understood them and stated that she thought they would be fun to do. Printing the student directions in a larger type, on a separate page, would make the book more user-friendly for teachers.

At this point, I will highlight several of the activities included in the book. Although "Attribute Socks" was listed as a science and language arts center, it is an excellent activity for math, too. The "Morphological Matrix" activity looked like a fun activity to reinforce knowledge of characters from a book. The author listed specific characters from specific books on the character section of the chart. It would have been beneficial if that area could have been left blank for the teacher to complete. Teachers could write in the books their class had read, personalizing them to their individual grade level. For this activity, Meador included a Picture Matrix for younger students or bilingual students, which was helpful. This center was perhaps the richest in the book, as the author showed how it could be used in language arts, math, and science.

The "Double Dipping" activity, which used a picture of an ice cream cone to employ reading strategies, looked fun and interesting for children. In "Ways to Measure," a math activity, the children decide which units of measurement they would use to measure specific items. I would definitely utilize this center in my classroom. It provided a rebus for younger children to complete the activity, addressing several learning styles. "Background Music" helps the children interpret texts when they listen to music and match the music to specific parts of the passage, engaging their creativity.

I found this book valuable, as it offered some new ideas on how to effectively utilize learning centers in the classroom. It also showed some simple, yet effective ways teachers can modify their centers to accommodate the needs of all students. This goal of instruction is paramount to good teaching, and the author helped emphasize that important point. Last of all, the book presented new information while sparking teacher creativity. To give teachers a starting point, along with resources to continue on their own, is an important outcome for a book. This book accomplishes that purpose, and offers valuable information to elementary educators on differentiating center use in their classrooms.

Reviewed by Ellen Shamas-Wright, second grade teacher at Mark Hopkins Elementary School in Littleton, Colorado. Ms. Shamas-Wright has written book reviews for *Child* magazine and *Headlinemuse.com*. She holds a Master of Education Degree from Vanderbilt University. She has started working towards her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Innovation with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center.

Richison, Jeanine D.; Hernandez, Anita C. & Carter, Marcia J. (2006). *Theme-Sets for Secondary Students: How to Scaffold Core Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: [Heinemann](#).

Pages: 155 Price: \$19.00 ISBN: 0-325-00914-7

It is not news that secondary level language arts/ English teachers experience many challenges in today's classrooms. As the authors Richison, Hernandez and Carter point out, our public schools are demographically different now and the No Child Left Behind legislation adds a high level of accountability. Middle and high school teachers see both ends of a variety of student-learning spectrums. Often in the same classroom, we now see greater diversity of language, ability, motivation and development, which contribute to some students reading literature reluctantly, if at all. Some students, who are able learners, prefer to have teachers deliver the analysis instead of engaging in the hard work of reading and grappling with their thoughts. To reach reluctant readers, the authors offer a student-centered, differentiated classroom methodology called theme-sets. Theme-sets enable a variety of students to actually read, derive their own meaning, and demonstrate comprehension in a numbers of ways. Another deeper outcome is that students might even enjoy the process along the way as they build a positive mental image of themselves as readers.

The book is set up in logical manner with introductory chapters explaining the rationale and organizational logistics of developing theme-sets (chapters 1-2). The authors explain that theme-sets are groups of texts selected for shared literary themes and represent a variety of reading levels. After all, students of any ability or background can relate to big ideas like class conflict, loss, identity, conceptions of beauty, faith, knowledge of self, dehumanization, etc. Each set contains picture books, childrens chapter books, young

adult chapter books, the core literature selection, advanced reading selection, and non-fiction or non-traditional texts. The core selection is the focus of the lesson with the other readings supporting it at both the easier reading and more challenging reading sides. The essence of the methodology is to start with picture books to stimulate discussion. Students can start by discussing: "Just what is the theme of these picture books?" and concurrently activate their prior knowledge of the topic, setting, plot line or character type. This scaffolding will help introduce the material to reluctant readers. Next the students will read childrens easy chapter books and participate in activities to activate and develop understanding of the themes and sub-themes. From there, students move up to the young adult books and finally to the core selection. Like other differentiation strategies, students participation is guided and they are offered choices along the way as they move from simple, picture based text to increasingly more complex text.

The end of the book (chapters 8 -9) deals exclusively with core academic instruction for English learners. The chapters are very useful since many teachers have not had formal instruction in how to support these students. The authors answer the question: what is academic English and how can it be acquired? The presupposition is that students who appear to be fluent in English may not have the linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural/psychological background necessary for success in an academic setting. The authors present profiles of 3 students with varying needs and skillfully connect these English language learners with theme-sets.

Richison, Hernandez and Carter offer a wealth of classroom experience and speak with authenticity on how to organize and set up the theme-sets. They discuss practical questions about journals, syllabi, assessments and grades. They are forthright in their assertion that finding the funds and time to purchase the books is often the hardest part. However, they do offer suggestions for borrowing books as well as finding the money to purchase them.

Five detailed theme sets are outlined in separate chapters (chapters 3-7) for quick accessibility. Theme sets include: Migrant Families (core text: Grapes of Wrath), Growing Up Ethnic in America (core text: Their Eyes Were Watching God), Literature of War (core text: Night), The Bullying Mentality (core text: Lord of the Flies; Great Expectations; or The Scarlet Letter) and finally Utopian/Dystopian Societies (core text: Fahrenheit 451). Each chapter offers historical information and background for the unit as well as an annotated, thematic book list of about 30-40 books arranged in order of reading difficulty. Each chapter outlines lesson plans and activities for each theme, and sub-theme. These lesson plans clearly honor the work of John Gardner and include assignments which celebrate multiple intelligences and students different learning styles. Much of the coursework and projects is creative and engaging. For example, in the bullying theme-set (chapter 6) students create life-size paper cut-outs of characters. Every time a character is offended or hurt in the book, students cut off a piece of the body then tape it back on with an apologetic note to the character. Seeing the damaged, patched together characters enables students to truly see the effect bullying can have and how it can relate to them in life.

Literature Circles and Socratic Seminars are discussed without much supporting detail. If a reader were not familiar with these powerful, student centered discussion methodologies the reader would need to research them further. The authors cite references through out the book however, which allow thoughtful practioners opportunity for follow up. There also are a number of scholarly citations and references in sections dealing with rationale for theme-sets and historical background for each theme. Technologically savvy teachers--and students--will appreciate the plethora of web addresses included throughout the book.

This book is a highly useful resource for secondary level practitioners. The title actually scaffolds the content of the book. Richison, Hernandez and Carter offer a solid rationale, creative lesson plans and comprehensive book lists to assist teachers in creating differentiated theme-sets for their secondary level students. I would highly recommend this book to educators moving beyond teaching the traditional, beloved, canon in a traditional manner to those who are embracing a focus on student-constructed meaning of text. When asked what they teach, if teachers answer something like, We are doing Romeo and Juliet, this book is for them! Theme-sets for Secondary Students offers concrete guidance to those in transition from teaching a single text with interpretations freely given by the teacher, to a student-centered approach using a variety of high quality text and diverse strategies to assess comprehension. In addition to teachers, media specialists, literacy coaches, district curriculum personnel as well as literacy oriented administrators all will glean useful strategies, actual book titles and a methodology that respects all learners.

Reviewed by Hilary Lang Greenebaum, Graduate Assistant, PhD Program: Educational Leadership & Innovation, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center. She was formerly a Middle School Administrator in Littleton Colorado.

Schaefer, Lola M. (2006). *Writing Lesssons for the Overhead, Grades 2-3: 20 Transparencies That Show Models of Strong Writing with Companion Mini-Lessons*. New

York: [Scholastic](#).

Pages: 80 Price: \$18.99 ISBN: 0-439-75369-4

When I taught at an alternative high school I had many students who were still reading on the second and third grade levels. As we worked with their reading and writing processes, I found that taking passages out of many of the books that they enjoyed, adding a few errors, and having them correct those passages worked well as a method of teaching them to read editorially.

Lola Schaefer has saved harried teachers everywhere some hours of extra work by creating a themed lesson, focusing structured mini-lessons, then taking passages to which students can relate, and creating overheads that help students to see and correct errors.

My favorite chapter, "Show, Dont Tell," explores how to make student writing come to life. While most student writing is essay or research, the author points out that students can and perhaps should still learn many stylistic lessons from fiction writers. Life is too short to read boring writing.

As with each chapter, the author constructs a clear and concise lesson plan. She begins with a vision of the why. This is important, particularly because beginning teachers are getting less about creating vision in their teaching and more about constructing norm-driven lessons. By giving an introduction that explains the vision, she gives teachers the ideals of the lesson, and conveys in four short paragraphs how the teacher can introduce the topic to their students.

When writers tell, they report information. It sounds distant and businesslike. . . Invite them into the action and the sensory details. (p. 46)

After the global introduction, Schaefer gives a model discussion of how the teacher might lead a mini-lesson on show dont tell. She gives sample questions, and possible answers, so that the teacher might think through how the students will react prior to the lesson time. If there is extra time, extra examples are given. The author suggests having students find passages in books that each knows and appreciates. She spends time talking about listening with their "writer's ears."

The mini-lesson tells where and how to use the overheads within each chapter. It describes methods by which the students can be led to ask questions about the different uses of verbs, methods by which writers can choose different words to change the nuances of the sentence, and how the vocabulary within the sentence can draw a picture for the reader rather than simply explaining a point.

Schaefer includes a number of insets, including "Tips for Writers." In it she gives seven examples of how to take students through activities that will help them add more detail and activity to their writing.

Though each chapter is short (Chapter 6 is only 6 pages), the author packs much information into them. I was surprised that this book had such a narrow grade-level focus. I think it could be used for many more grades than just second and third. I suppose in this day of restricted curriculum, authors and publishers have to make sure that books are targeted to the "right" audience, but when I was teaching high school, my students read books, and I used curricula from the whole spectrum. In the old school we just used whatever worked. I think that for many teachers looking for models of strong writing for their students, this book will work.

Reviewed by Jennifer A. Borek, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Secondary English Education at The University of Memphis.

Sher, Barbara (2006). *Attention Games: 101 Fun, Easy Games That Help Kids Learn to Focus*. San Francisco, CA: [Jossey-Bass](#).

Pages: 184 Price: \$16.95 ISBN: 0-471-73654-6

With the seeming explosion in the number of identified cases of Attention Deficit Disorder, and the accompanying rise in the use of prescription drugs to treat this exceptionality, there is a pressing need for research and resources that might be used to help children remain focused. Certainly, *Attention Games*, by Barbara Sher is worthy of consideration in this regard.

As Sher points out, there are essentially two forms of attention. The first is open and global, and provides an impression of the overall environment, while the second, is more focused—requires sustained concentration. Both of these forms of attention are needed, and, for Sher, it is crucial that we are able to shift from an open to a focused state of attention.

In *Attention Games*, the reader is provided with a series of activities designed to target both open and focused attention, as well as the transition between these two states of awareness. The games, while simplistic, are easily implemented and are valuable in that they may help to capture the interest of those children for whom remaining focused is problematic. For example, a large personally decorated crate can be transformed into a "thinking box" which, when turned on its side, creates a soothing physical barrier to prevent children from being distracted. This is but one example of how these games can be used to help focus attention.

In addition, the manner in which Shers work is organized is laudable. The book is divided into five parts, each section dealing with a discrete group of children based on age, ranging from infants to teens. This is invaluable in that each of these games is designed for a specific population, thereby facilitating their ease of use. Too often, activities of this nature are constructed and packaged in such a way that it is purported that they can be used with all children, regardless of age. This is highly problematic in that a one size fits all approach is inadequate, particularly since more developmental change occurs during childhood than during any other period. As such, what are required are not activities that treat all children the same, but, rather, those that recognize the inherent differences among them. Shers work reflects this need to respect diversity, thereby adding to the overall cogency of the book.

In sum, *Attention Games* is a thoughtful and informative work. While not an academic piece, it offers a practical approach to helping children remain focused. Certainly, owing to the obvious importance attached to the issue of attention, this book is pertinent and timely, and, is a great resource for parents, teachers and others who work with children.

Reviewed by David Young, Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario.

Sigmon, Cheryl M. & Ford, Sylvia M. (2006) *Just-Right Writing Mini-Lessons: Grades 4-6*. New York: [Scholastic](#).

Pages: 128 Price: \$17.99 ISBN: 978-0439-57410-5

The third in a series of writing instruction resources, Sigmon and Ford's new volume contains little that is new. The chief appeal of the book is the compilation of so many ideas in a short, easy-to-use reference. Classroom teachers can quickly locate and implement a lesson in response to students' instructional needs, and many teachers, especially those just beginning their careers, will want to keep the book close at hand.

The subtitle for this collection is "Mini-Lessons to Teach Your Students the Essential Skills and Strategies They Need to Write Fiction and Non-Fiction." I'm not sure students who have completed the fifty-plus lessons will have these "essential skills," but Sigmon and Ford have definitely addressed the issues of writing for standardized tests. In preparing the lessons, the authors consulted curriculum standards of ten states and include an index of standards on pages 14-15. At times, the lessons seem too brief even for mini-lessons and do not seem to be logically connected to each other. However, the introduction stresses the fact that this book is not meant to contain the entire writing curriculum and that teachers should address the specific needs of their students and their curriculum standards in deciding which lessons to use and when. In fact, the authors prepared their lessons with the idea of their being part of a larger writing workshop program in the classroom.

A strong emphasis on the revision process is evident throughout. Even many lessons of direct grammar instruction are followed by suggestions on how the students can return to a piece they have written and incorporate the new information. Another useful feature is the appendix containing reproducible worksheets and charts. Two that would be particularly practical for fourth through sixth grade students are the "Rules for Capitalization" and "Use of Commas" charts which students could keep in their writing folders for easy reference.

Experienced teachers will find the book less useful than novices who have not developed their own similar mini-lessons, but the ideas presented bear revisiting by all elementary writing instructors.

Reviewed by Jean S. Hamm, Assistant Professor, Clemmer College of Education, East Tennessee State University.

Singer, Jessica (2006) *Stirring Up Justice: Writing and Reading to Change the World*. Portsmouth, NH: [Heinemann](#).

Pages: 146 Price: \$18.50 ISBN: 0-325-00747-0

In *Stirring Up Justice: Writing and Reading to Change the World*, Jessica Singer tears down some of the walls between our school classrooms and the "real world" through a critical reading and writing unit on social activism. Careful not to impose her own view of activism or a personal agenda on her students, Singer employs five reading and writing activities over an eleven-week period to help students discover their own passions and social issues about which to respond.

Although Singer created the unit for her ninth grade language arts class, the activities in the book could easily be adapted for students from middle school through college undergraduates. The five activities—"Stories of Justice," "Book Choice," "Writing into Activism," "Songs of Activists," and "Culminating Project"—are presented as the first five chapters of the book. Each activity builds on the previous, allowing students to become well-acquainted with a particular activist and giving each student a chance to discover what issue is most important to him or her.

For example, in "Book Choice" and "Songs of Activists," Ms. Singer provides a list of books and songs written by and/or about activists or specific social issues. For the reading, students in her class either chose a book from the list or found one on their own. Several students chose the autobiography of Holocaust survivor Irene Opdyke, *In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer* (1999). Likewise, one of her students recommended *King of the World* (1998), a book by David Remnick about Muhammad Ali. For the song activity, Ms. Singer shared several songs that she had discovered were meant to inspire change. Students then chose a song of their own, explaining—through an analysis of the song's lyrics—how the song promoted social activism.

The culminating project demonstrates how all of the reading, writing, and discussion about each student's topic built to a lively and inspiring presentation of students' work. Students moved from reading and writing about the work of others and found an issue that they felt strongly about. A couple of students wrote about funding cuts for public education; some wrote about environmental issues that threatened their region of the country; and some wrote about certain prejudices that teenagers face from adults and their peers. For the final presentation, Ms. Singer created a public gallery format where students could teach their classmates about the particular social issue that they had researched and could also explain how to take action in order to get involved.

The power of the book comes from Singer placing the students at the center of the project: "When students are kept at a distance with a curriculum that does not feel connected to who they are as young adults, the relevance of the work remains difficult for them to grasp" (p. 72). Throughout the book, she uses quotations from her students' writing to demonstrate how they took ownership of the project and of various social issues. In addition, her writing prompts included throughout the book provide teachers with practical resources to use in helping students with, among other things, embedding quotes, writing leads, and revising their work.

Singer does acknowledge that, obviously, not all of her students embraced the project. Some avoided reading or struggled to find a topic about which they felt passionate; and two did not complete the project. However, the overall message and tone of this book is one of success. Most of the students realized the power of social activism. Ultimately, Singer's project and her book celebrate the optimism and hope that teachers find in their students. She closes the book by reaffirming why the walls between schools and the "real world" should be razed: "[My students'] wholehearted participation gave me the greatest faith in the ability of individuals to improve the world we live in" (p. 141).

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Opdyke, Irene Gut & Armstrong, Jennifer. (1999). *In my hands: Memories of a Holocaust rescuer*. New York: Knopf

Remnick, David. (1998). *King of the world: Muhammad Ali and the rise of an American hero*. New York: Random House.

Reviewed by Blake R. Bickham, currently an instructor and doctoral candidate in teaching and teacher education at the University of Houston.

Turbill, Jan & Bean, Wendy (2006). *Writing Instruction K-6: Understanding Process, Purpose, Audience*. Katonah, NY: [Richard C. Owen Publishers](#).

Pages: 240 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 1-57274-748-x

Educators attend countless workshops, courses, and institutes looking for inspiration and ways to improve the work they are doing. Jan Turbill and Wendy Bean's book, *Writing Instruction K-6: Understanding Process, Purpose, and Audience*, provides just the sort of stimulation teachers hope for when we invest time and

money into professional development.

As indicated in the forward, this book is recommended for "teachers who sense they have lost their way in the teaching of writing..." Such educators will be able to use the discussions in the first four chapters about what writing is and how it is done to re-focus their thoughts on how they would like to teach writing to their students.

Farther in, the chapters' organization changes to itemized models for instruction (i.e. "The Four Pillars for Managing Writing Instruction") which are developed through brief anecdotes from a variety of grade levels and practical strategies. Readers will find it easy to jump from consideration of this text to direct classroom application.

Turbill and Bean's ideas are clearly supported by sound theory. The authors do much to remind us of the research that backs various approaches to teaching writing and the links between reading and writing. Some readers will enjoy the concise explanations of the different approaches to teaching writing (i.e. Writing as Creativity, Writing as Process, Writing as Thinking and Learning). The review of this research works to help the reader understand what was learned from these approaches and why the authors' focus on audience, purpose, and genre is worth classroom use.

This book would work well as a graduate level text. The included summary questions and professional development activities can serve to fuel discussion and/or individual application. Readers are reminded to take action with the new perspectives and teaching refreshment this book offers.

Though worthwhile, the book is not seamless. The title is too exclusive; the approaches to writing instruction and discussions are valuable for all grade levels. Also, the bulk of the research is disappointingly dated, with much coming from Turbill's research in the 1980s and studies cited in countless other books on teaching writing. However, the authors suggest that the reader ought to be able to see that the application of this more dated research still is valid. Finally, the chapter on assessment does not offer much practical advice on how to turn evaluation of the student's writing into a letter grade or score, and in this section the reader may wonder about how practical the application strategies are for producing an assessment that does not promote a false sense of accomplishment. These caveats should by no means dissuade teachers who are looking to redefine their writing instruction from taking a look at this book.

Reviewed by Leah Lidbury, lecturer, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

Van Zoest, Laura R., Editor (2006) *Teachers Engaged in Research: Inquiry Into Mathematics Classrooms, Grades 9-12*. Greenwich, Connecticut: [Information Age Publishing](#).

Pages: 271 Price: \$39.95 ISBN: 1-59311-501-6

Teachers engaged in research: Inquiry into mathematics classrooms, grades 9-12 is one part of a four part series under the general editorship of Marilyn Cochran-Smith. Laura R. Van Zoest is behind this volume dealing exclusively with grades 9-12. The book consists of a series introduction by Cochran-Smith, an introductory chapter by Van Zoest and 13 chapters written by researchers and teachers from across the United States (eleven chapters) and Canada (two chapters). According to the Information Age Publishing website, the series is "sponsored by the NCTM" (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics). The book itself bears the NCTM logo, but the only other evidence of NCTM's involvement is the inclusion of at least one NCTM *Standards* document (see <http://standards.nctm.org/>) in thirteen of the fifteen essay reference lists.

Cochran-Smith's short introductory essay intersperses lavish praise for her own project with a general statement of her objectives.

This remarkable quartet of books reveals what it really means for mathematics teachers to engage in inquiry. The goal of all this inquiry is nothing short of a culture shift in the teaching of mathematics—the creation of classroom learning environments where the focus is deep understanding of mathematical concepts, practical application of skills, and problem solving. ... Taken together as a whole, the chapters in these four books have the potential to inform mathematics education research, practice and policy in ways that reach far beyond the walls of the classrooms where the work was originally done. (p. x)

The essays in this volume are written either by teachers or by teachers working with mathematics education researchers. Each essay focuses on teachers attempting to put their understanding of research into practice, either individually, or as part of a community of teachers. Van Zoest states that the book is "written primarily for teachers who have or who are being encouraged to develop an awareness of and commitment to teaching

for understanding" (p. 5). The book definitely is written at a level that would be comprehensible to the average mathematics teacher, with only modest explication of theoretical issues; referenced mathematics education research literature is typically brought forward in a straightforward, uncritical manner. The focus of the book, to be sure, is the attempts of teachers to put new ideas into practice. I will look more closely at two of the chapters, which I think are interesting in their own right, as well as being illustrative of the book's general tone and content.

On the theme of teacher development, the seventh chapter, "Navigating the learning curve: Learning to teach mathematics through lesson study" stands out as a nice example of how change can be institutionalized. The authors, John Carter, Robert Gallemsgaard and Michelle Pope are all teachers in a high school of more than 4500 students. The mathematics department consists of 44 teachers. For new teachers, the school has developed a teacher induction program consisting of five monthly half-day meetings, each dedicated to an ongoing lesson study project. Carter, Gallemsgaard and Pope provide a clear description of the lesson study activities on which the beginning teachers work. They describe the levels of agreement and collegiality that develop over the five month period, and conclude that the program assists teachers in their school to develop good habits that help them to teach for understanding.

At the end of the lesson study period, one teacher taught the lesson that had been developed while the others watched the teacher and students. The conclusions are, of course, unsurprising. They agreed that students should have time to think for themselves, that the classroom environment is a significant factor in student thinking, that their own collaboration reflects their desires for student work and that the collegial discussions they had during the process led to changes to classroom practices. While I doubt that many significant, general conclusions are warranted from this account, I do feel a strong desire to explore some of their activities with my colleagues. Perhaps that is the real point of the book: it motivates teachers to put their theoretically-inspired beliefs into practice and to reflect on their successes and difficulties.

The eleventh chapter, "Teaching mathematics with problems: What one teacher learned through research" by Nicole Garcia and Patricio Herbst is provocative to the teacher in me, but like the earlier chapter, left me with almost no general conclusions of the sort that I expect from educational research. The essay is presented in Garcia's voice, as she participates in Herbst's classroom research, at first while a student teacher in "Megan's" classroom. "The project ... consisted of developing lessons on area and evaluating how these lessons affected students' ideas of the process involved in proving and what it means to do a proof" (p. 199). Central to the lessons were to be " 'big problems', such as comparing the area of a quadrilateral with the area of the quadrilateral formed by its midpoints [i.e. the midpoints of the sides]" (p. 201).

The chapter begins a bit roughly, with what amounts to an insult to Megan. "Whereas I respected the choices Megan had made regarding how to conduct her classes, I was looking forward to learning how to create a classroom environment in which students had lively discussions about mathematics and felt comfortable expressing their views and concerns" (p. 198). The implication that Megan's classroom is one in which there are no lively conversations about mathematics and in which students do not feel comfortable expressing their views and concerns seems to me to be ill-mannered, and should not have been included in the chapter.

After working through problem-informed teaching and reflecting on the experience, Garcia then writes of her experiences a year later, as a salaried teacher in her own classroom. Here she reflects on her own discontent with the earlier research project. She finds tension in what she perceives to be classroom norms of fairness in problems, and her goals as a teacher to use problems that are open. Some students, she feels, have a legitimate expectation that teacher-posed problems have solutions that are within their abilities to produce. For me, this is the most interesting portion of the chapter. For better or for worse, teachers regularly find themselves caught between what they think is the best pedagogical practice and what students are prepared to accept. In Garcia's case, she produced what she believed was a compromise solution: she developed scaffolding problems that were solvable to the students, but were open enough to satisfy her pedagogical desires. Other teachers might solve the difficulty in other ways, but the chapter illustrates an interesting and important challenge in putting teacher understanding of research into practice.

Teachers Engaged in Research offers little to expand the current state of knowledge about mathematics education, but that is not the point of the collection. The book offers pre-service and practicing secondary mathematics teachers some ideas for putting what they have read into practice, and provides some good models of reflection and refinement for such experiences. And while I do not share Cochran-Smith's optimism that this will amount to a "culture shift," I do believe that it is a good and worthwhile pursuit for at least some mathematics teachers.

Reviewed by John S. Macnab, PhD. Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton AB, Canada.



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